



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – September 28, 2010

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WORLD RABIES DAY

Partners across the state and from the federal level helped Arizona turn the tide on rabies – but the fight is not over. Today is World Rabies Day, a time not only to appreciate how much teamwork makes a difference in Arizona, but realize rabies still kills thousands of people every year in other countries. Rabies is a viral disease that affects the brain and nervous system and is normally transmitted by the bite of an infected animal.

“Rabies in animals jumped to record levels in 2008 and 2009 in Arizona, but appears to be much lower this year,” said Craig Levy, Program Manager for the Vector-borne Disease Program at the Arizona Department of Health Services. “Thanks to the long-term efforts of animal control programs, Arizona State Public Health Laboratory, local and state epidemiologists, the United States Department of Agriculture, State Game and Fish Department, and other agencies, no one has died of rabies in Arizona since 1981. The intense work done by these partners to monitor rabies activity, follow-up on human and pet exposures, and to dispense oral rabies vaccine to wild animals has helped to reduce the rabies risk in Arizona.”*

The public plays an important role in fighting rabies as well. The best way for someone to protect their family is to ensure pets are vaccinated against rabies. In some Arizona communities recently people had to go a step further, bringing pets and their food dishes inside after dark, to keep wild animals and the risk of rabies away from residential areas.

So far in 2010, 13 people and 74 domestic animals have been exposed to the rabies virus; 89 wild animals have tested positive for the virus. At the end of September 2009, 211 wild animals had tested positive and the year ended with 280 lab-confirmed cases.

Worldwide, rabies is not monitored and controlled as effectively as it is here. World Rabies Day is intended to raise awareness of the 55,000 people who die each year. Be sure to visit the [ADHS website](#) for more information on rabies in Arizona and the [World Rabies Day website](#) to watch educational videos about rabies.

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see [“Who’s Protecting you from Rabies in Arizona”*](#)